

# Nunes to introduce water legislation

**John Ellis, Fresno Bee, 2-18-10**

A local congressman said Wednesday that he will introduce legislation to address a host of controversial water issues that have frustrated San Joaquin Valley farmers and ranchers.

Visalia Republican Devin Nunes admits his legislation is doomed -- at least for now. But he still vowed to do his best to press the matter in Washington, holding hearings through the "hot, dry summer."

Among other things, Nunes' proposal would:

- Waive parts of the Endangered Species Act that let officials limit water pumping in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The waiver would be in effect until a system such as a canal or tunnel is built to move water around the delta.
- "Fast track" construction of a system to move water around the delta and for new reservoirs such as Temperance Flat, proposed for a site above Millerton Lake.
- Rewrite the San Joaquin River Settlement to make it more "financially feasible" and with an "environmentally sustainable warm-water fishery."

The existing settlement is supposed to restore an uninterrupted, year-round flow of water to parts of the San Joaquin River that have been mostly dry since Friant Dam was completed in 1944 so that salmon can return.

But many of the same proposals have failed over the years, whether Republicans or Democrats have been in power in Washington.

Environmental and fishing groups scoffed at Nunes' proposed legislation.

Zeke Grader, executive director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Associations, said Nunes' proposal is "terribly myopic."

"He's just talking about the same old things that even Ronald Reagan turned down when he was governor," Grader said.

While Nunes acknowledges his proposals have no chance this year, he is hopeful that if Republicans can pick up seats in Congress this November -- especially the Senate seat held by Democrat Barbara Boxer -- his legislation might have a chance next year.

Grader is skeptical.

"Most of these things he has offered up are losers," he said.